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Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 1

Winter 1991

With this issue, EAP begins its second year. We editors are grateful for the many written and spoken words of encouragement. We also thank readers who have contributed information, news, suggestions, reviews, and commentaries. *Please keep these items coming!* Also, if you have not yet renewed your subscription for 1991, please do so. We are grateful to the several individuals who have provided generous donations to help *EAP* financially.

In this issue, we feature articles by educator David Denton, psychologist Louise Million, and philosopher David Appelbaum. In addition, we run a review of landscape architect Sherry Dorward's *Design for Mountain Communities: A Landscape and Architecture Guide*, which is an important effort to harmonize research and design, ecology and aesthetics, and nature and people through understanding what mountain environments essentially are and then planning and designing accordingly. Our illustrations in this issue are from Dorward's book.

In the first issue of *EAP*, we requested commentaries on classic phenomenological works in architectural and environmental phenomenology. David Denton is the first reader to respond to our request. He interprets some of the major themes in one of the most instrumental phenomenological works pertaining to the physical and spatial world--philosopher Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, first published in 1938. Denton illustrates Bachelard's continuing relevance, both ontological and existential, for the new century ahead.

Louise Million's essay explores the phenomenon of rocking through her own life experiences and

through etymological and historical perspectives. Million's essay is effective both in its clear personal descriptions and in its effort to present, through written form, the dialectical movement between experience and conception and practice and theory. Style of writing and manner of format is a central question in all phenomenological description and writing. In that its form mirrors its subject, Million's essay offers one simple but intriguing model for phenomenological presentation.

We conclude with David Appelbaum's thoughtful consideration of the relationship among home, host, and guest. Appelbaum is the author of the recently-published *Voice* (SUNY Press, 1990), a study of the subjugation of voice by thought. In the essay presented here--part of a book in progress that deals with the home and life cycle--Appelbaum explores the dialectical exchange between insider and outsider, home and horizon--themes that have clear experiential and conceptual relationship with Denton's and Million's concerns. We meet once again recurring phenomenological questions: How can we have a home yet also feel membership with the horizons beyond? How can we be ourselves yet integrate that selfness with the larger world? How can we use experience to invigorate our understanding, which, in turn, might shift and widen our experience?



PUBLICATIONS, GROUPS, PROGRAMS, AND EVENTS

The 10th conference of the **International Human Science Research Association** will be held at the University of Gothenberg, Sweden, 18-22 August 1991. The theme of the conference is "Human Science as Methodology."

The prospectus reads in part: "How do the distinct methodological alternatives within the human science tradition contribute to our understanding of meanings inherent in experience and action and their embeddedness in culture and society?...Sessions may involve ethics, activity theory, social anthropology, psychoanalysis, phenomenography, phenomenological psychology, learning and teaching, nursing, teacher education as a scientific field, contextual interpretation of history, description and interpretation, feminist perspectives, as well as the underlying question of the methodological distinctiveness of human science in general."

For further information, write: Human Science Research Conference, Elisabeth Nyqvist, Department of Education, Box 1010, S-431-26 Molndal, Sweden (031-679000).

A conference, **Rural Planning & Development: Visions of the 21st Century**, will be held 13-15 February 1991, at the Hilton Inn Gateway, Orlando, Florida. Conference topics relevant to *EAP* include: "Spirit of Place and the Aesthetics of Landscape," "Community Viability," and "Bio-Regionalism." Conference sponsors include the Small Town and Rural Planning Division of the American Planning Association; and several departments and programs at the University of Florida and University of North Florida. Contact: Office of Conferences, University of Florida, 551 IFAS, Gainesville, Florida 32611-0551.

Edited by Georg Feuerstein, the **Spectrum Review** features articles, interviews, and book reviews dealing with self-development, spirituality, and environmental awareness. Special issues have focused on "animal rights," "wholeness," and "light and shadow." Distinguished thinkers interviewed

have included philosopher of religion Huston Smith and philosopher Jean Lanier. The journal frequently reviews books dealing with environmental ethics, deep ecology, and traditional ways of knowing nature. An annual subscription is \$12 for four issues. Write: Georg Feuerstein, Integral Publishing, P. O. Box 1030, Lower Lake, CA 95457.

The **Green Earth Foundation** conducts and supports "research, education and dissemination of information that fosters and contributes to the healing and harmonizing of the relationships between humanity and Nature." GEF publishes a quarterly newsletter *Green Earth Observer*, which includes short articles, book reviews, and information on ecological and environmental organizations. The foundation gives major attention to work in deep ecology and ecophilosophy. Annual membership is \$25 (students/low income \$15). Contact: Green Earth Foundation, P. O. Box 1119, Fairfax, California 94930.

Kairos is a non-sectarian organization interested in the fundamental interrelatedness of all things, particularly as reflected in the sacred traditions of humankind. A major focus of the group is sacred space and sacred architecture as well as the four studies of Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy.

During the spring equinox, 21-24 March 1991, Kairos will co-sponsor a conference on *Art and the Sacred* in Santa Fe. The focus is "the sacred in the arts with its inspiration in the metaphysical and natural worlds." For more information, write: Kairos, c/o D. Yarbrough, 7025 Clayton, Dallas, TX. 75214.



CITATIONS RECEIVED

Buttimer, Anne, 1990. Geography, Humanism, and Global Concern. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 80 (1), 1-33.

This article frames a perspective on the history of Western humanism and considers its value in fostering a "common concern about global environmental problems."

Paul Evan Faulstich, 1990. *Landscape Perception and Visual Metaphor in Warlpiri World View*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hawaii.

This thesis examines the landscape experiences and perceptions of the Australian Warlpiri Aboriginals, for whom "the structure and meaning of the...landscape is partially flexible, enabling individuals to become architects of their own existential situations."

Christina R. Mann, 1989. *Childrens' Activities in Health Care Waiting Room Environments: A Phenomenological Investigation*. Master's Thesis, University of Missouri, Columbia.

An observational study of children in waiting rooms and suggestions for better waiting-room design. Also discussed: the "merits and limitations of phenomenology as a design-research methodology."

Clare Cooper Marcus & Carolyn Francis, 1990. *People Places: Design Guidelines for Urban Open Space*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Clearly presented guidelines for creating more humane open spaces that include public places, urban plazas, neighborhood parks, campus spaces, and outdoor space for children, hospital patients, and the elderly. A useful complement to Marcus's earlier *Housing as if People Mattered* (University of California Press, 1986).

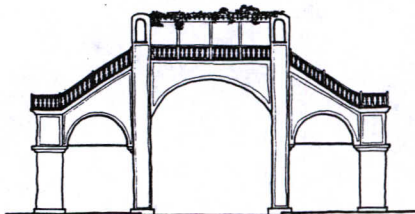
Pierre Von Meiss, 1990. *Elements of Architecture: From Form to Place*. London: E. & F. N. Spon.

A theory of architecture that seeks to hold form and function together through experiential themes. Some representative headings: "Openings: The window in crisis," "Phenomena of perception: The pleasure of looking at, listening to, feeling, touching, and moving through architecture." "The object: faces, corners, relationship to ground and sky."

FILM ON CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

Those *EAP* readers interested in the work of Berkeley architect **Christopher Alexander** will want to see a new film on his ideas and work, produced and directed by award-winning filmmaker **Ruth Landy**. Entitled *Places for the Soul: The Architecture of Christopher Alexander*, the film centers on Alexander's life aim: the creation of beautiful, timeless buildings whose sense of wholeness unites thought and feeling, and creates a sense of place and wholeness. The film, explains the promotional brochure, "explores Alexander's increasingly influential ideas and his controversial attempts to introduce a new, unified approach to design and construction. It leads the viewer through two of his major projects--the stunning New Eishin University campus near Tokyo, Japan, and an innovative shelter for the homeless in San Jose, California."

For ordering information, write: University of California Extension Media Center, 2176 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA. 94704 (415-642-0460).



Gateway from Alexander's *A New Theory of Urban Design* (Oxford, 1987).

NOTEWORTHY PUBLICATIONS

Max van Manen, 1990. *Researching Lived Experience*. Albany, New York: SUNY Press; London, Ontario: Althouse Press.

Though written by a Canadian professor of Education and primarily concerned with pedagogical research, this book is a useful introduction to practical phenomenological method. Van Manen's aim is "to introduce and explicate a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to human science research and writing" (p. ix).

He presents phenomenological method as a "dynamic interplay among six research activities" (p. 30) that he discusses chapter by chapter: chap. 1: turning to the nature of lived experience; (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it; (3) reflecting on essential themes that characterize the phenomenon; (4) using the act of writing and rewriting to come to a clear description of the phenomenon; (5) maintaining a dedicated and clear relationship to the phenomenon; and (6) balancing the research by holding sight of both parts and whole.

Though the real-world examples in the book deal with experiences of education and parenting, several of the chapters are broad enough for use in graduate courses on phenomenological and qualitative methods. For example, chap. 3, argues that the researcher needs "to search everywhere in the lifeworld for lived-experience material that, upon reflective examination, might yield something of its fundamental nature."

Van Manen then discusses several possible sources of experiential evidence that include: personal experience; tracing etymologies; searching idiomatic phrases; gathering experiential accounts from others; gathering written descriptions of experience; thoughtful, in-depth interviews; lifeworld observation; experiential descriptions in journals, biographies, and imaginative literature; art as a source of lived experience; and consulting phenomenological literature.

A useful introduction to phenomenological method, especially for newcomers.

VAN MANEN ON OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

[In phenomenological research], objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive categories. Both find their meaning and significance in the oriented (i.e., personal) relation that the researcher establishes with the "object" of his or her inquiry. Thus, "objectivity" means that the researcher is oriented to the object--that which stands in front of him or her. Objectivity means that the researcher remains true to the object. The researcher becomes in a sense a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the object. He or she wants to show it, describe it, interpret it while remaining faithful to it--aware that one is easily misled, side-tracked, or enchanted by extraneous elements. "Subjectivity" means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and in its greatest depth. Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way--while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions.

van Manen, p. 20.

Stephen Toulmin, 1990. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. New York: The Free Press.

Toulmin seeks to present the history of modernity, its underlying assumptions, and what these assumptions point to for a postmodern world. He argues that the modernity cultivated by the Renaissance (which emphasized the *oral*, the *particular*, the *local*, and the *timely*) was lost sight of by 17th-century thinkers (who, instead, emphasized the *written*, the *universal*, the *general*, the *timeless*). Toulmin delineates this modernist shift from humanism to rationalism and then asks how our thinking must again shift today.

He concludes that none of the major problems that the world currently faces "can be addressed without bringing to the surface questions about the value of human life, and our responsibility for protecting the world of nature, as well as that of humanity. All the 'changes of mind' that were characteristic of the 17th century's turn from humanism to rationalism, are as a result, being reversed. The 'modern' focus on the written, the universal, the general, and the timeless—which monopolized the work of most philosophers after 1630—is being broadened to include once again the oral, the particular, the local, and the timely" (p. 186).

Toulmin claims that, practically and, especially, politically, this change of mind requires that we "disperse authority and adapt it more discerningly and precisely: on the one hand, to the needs of local areas and communities; and, on the other, to wider transnational functions" (p. 206).

This book offers a useful historical and societal framework in which to ponder the value of phenomenology, especially its ability to reconcile conceptually Toulmin's four polarities of writing-speaking, universality-particularity, globalism-localism, and timeliness-timelessness.



EDRA PRESENTATIONS INVOLVING PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

We did not have space in the fall 1990 EAP to list qualitative and phenomenological presentations at the annual Environmental Design Research meetings, held in May, 1990, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. We provide this list here.

- Art and the Non-Functional Object, M. Gee, Graduate School, City University of New York.
- Continuity and Change in Century-Old Farm Homes, M. Boschetti, Kansas State University.
- Anatomy of the Taishan Village, J. Hammond, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Variety of Religious and Important Places, R. Bechtel, University of Arizona, Tucson; and I. Altman, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
- Using Pattern Language to Identify Sense of Place: American Landscape Painter Frederic Church's Olana as a Test Case, D. Seamon, Kansas State University.
- Midwestern Suburban Landscapes and Residents' Values, R. Mugerauer, University of Texas at Austin.
- Peak Aesthetic Experiences and Natural Landscape, P. Gobster, North Central Forest Experiment Station, Chicago; and R. Chenoweth, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- The Felt Sense of Natural Environments, H. Schroeder, North Central Forest Experiment Station, Chicago.
- Experience at View Places: An Inquiry into Emotional Ties between People and Places, W. Engler, Iowa State University.
- Place Attachment Among Older Residents of a 'Ghost Town': A Transactional Approach, Carolyn Norris-Baker and Rick J. Scheidt, Kansas State University.

All of these papers are published in: Robert Selby, ed., *Coming of Age: Proceedings, Annual Meetings, 1990, Environmental Design Research Association* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois, 1990).

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Robert Burch is a philosopher at the University of Alberta, Edmonton. His publications are in the areas of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and the philosophy of technology. In a letter, he writes about the value of "place" to philosophy: "In the history of philosophy, there has been a conscious resistance to the consideration of place. Since Plato and Parmenides, the philosopher's thought has always sought to be 'u-topian', a thinking that transcended all limits of 'place'. In thinking, a philosopher was, so to speak, everywhere and nowhere. To discover the 'power of place,' then, philosophy (unlike other disciplines like geography or architecture) has to think directly against its own self-placement and sense. For philosophy, then, the task is not to come together with those other disciplines to rethink the notion of place, but to resituate the very ground of the disciplines(s) themselves.

"There are two issues that often arise in philosophical discussions of place. In some quarters the talk of 'place' is rejected as too 'everyday' (in *Being and Time*, Heidegger claims that we use spatial metaphors in theory because we are too pre-occupied with what is evidently at hand). Or, second, place is seen as too parochial--that in surveying places we tend to take the characteristics of the local tribe as universals.

"Though it is a 'technical' issue, I would argue that 'place' comes before and makes possible all spatiality and temporality and, hence, is the basis--not the product--of spatial metaphors. I would also argue that (and this is nothing new) the only meaningful sense of the universal in human affairs is found through the particular, through one's own place, and hence is 'concrete' rather than abstract.

"On the other hand, there is also a place for the study of 'place' as multi-dimensional and drawing on a wide range of disciplines. I have recently been discussing with a colleague the possibility of organizing a conference on the question of 'place' that would include people in and outside the academic community.

"My colleague's interest is specifically in the question of language and place, or *Sprache und Heimat*. But there is a vast array of people and perspectives that could be brought together--philosophers, architects, sociologists, geographers, environmentalists, and so forth--as well as people from cultures outside or, at least resisting, the hegemony of the Western instrumental viewpoint that levels all places to one." Address: Philosophy Department, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2G5.

Joao Baptista Ferreira de Mello is a Brazilian humanistic geographer. His dissertation is an exploration of Rio de Janeiro's sense of place, using as a descriptive base the songs of the city's composers of popular music during the period 1928--1989. Address: Rua Eduardo Ramos, 11; CEP 20520--Tijuca; Rio de Janeiro--RJ; Brazil.

Evelyn Martin is the Director of Professional Development at the American Planning Association in Washington, D. C. One of her current research interests focuses on land-use regulation and legal means of preserving sacred lands. She writes that she finds a qualitative, descriptive approach "quite helpful in addressing the broader theoretical context of my particular applied work with sacred places."

She recently organized a panel on "Sacred Places" at the national meeting of the American Planning Association held in Denver. The summary statement for the panel includes the following questions: "How can the value of sacred places become more universal?...At least 10 states have adopted or are considering adoption of statewide land-use planning systems. Can sacred places become a special classification in the manner that Maryland identifies 'areas of critical state concern'? What would be the criteria for defining sacred places? How does a governmental body deal with the diverse claims of sacredness (e.g., a claim of Native Americans vs. a claim by 'new age' groups)? How would equity issues be treated?" Address: APA, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Wash., D.C. 20036.

**TOWARD UNDERSTANDING MOUNTAINS EXISTENTIALLY:
SHERRY DORWARD'S DESIGN FOR MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES**

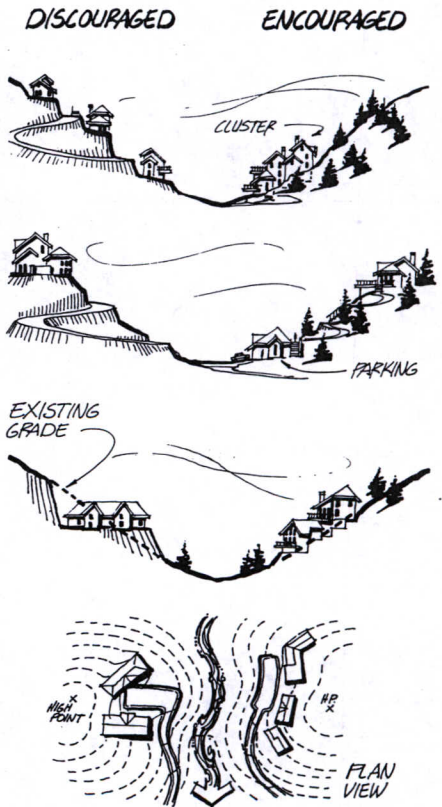
Though not directly phenomenological and only partly grounded in a qualitative perspective, Sherry Dorward's *Design for Mountain Communities* is a useful model for how knowledge and design, positivist science and interpretive understanding, can be fruitfully joined to serve both conceptual and practical ends.¹ Dorward clearly loves mountains and is distressed by much recent mountain development, especially in the United States, which she feels does not respect a mountainous sense of place. At the same time, she emphasizes that there have been some thoughtfully designed mountain communities and architecture; these become one of her sources for a comprehensive guidebook to mountain-community planning and design.

Strongly affected by architect Christopher Alexander's "Pattern Language," Dorward emphasizes the need to interpret mountain landscapes as ecological and experiential wholes. To build and live in mountains requires that people respect what mountains are and design built environments accordingly: "Design concepts and forms appropriate to mountain environments have their underpinnings in the physical constraints imposed by natural systems and in the special sensory character of the landscape. In the mountains, natural factors are the best source of community identity and the strongest determinant of form" (viii).

To present her argument, Dorward organizes her book in 13 chapters divided into three main sections: Part I provides three background chapters on the history and aesthetics of mountains; Part II (chapters 4-8) discusses major environmental factors—elevation, climate, geology, soils, and vegetation—that affect design; and Part III presents actual designs that range from mountain architecture and site details to entire mountain communities.

For environmental and architectural phenomenology, Dorward's work is heartening and important because she convincingly demonstrates how the natural world of the mountains can support the human world that lives there. In turn, we

human beings should listen to and understand mountains and always put them first, especially in our designing and building: "By regaining a sensitivity to the natural environment, design by itself can contribute to livable communities that exist in harmony with the fragile and beautiful mountain setting" (vii).



Ways to reduce grading on a slope (Dorward, p. 119).



Styles of mountain architecture (Dorward, p. 294).

To foster such sensitivity, Dorward provides three excellent chapters that seek to explore what mountains have been historically and aesthetically. In one sense, her work in these chapters might be seen as an implicit phenomenology of mountains. Echoing Christian Norberg-Sculz's *Genius Loci*, Dorward begins with mountains' essential geographical elements—*landform, water, vegetation, rocks, and atmospherics*. She examines the kinds of experiential responses various combinations of these elements evoke and then develops, in implicit Pattern-Language fashion, a set of design guidelines. For example:

- Respect the landscape's spiritual character and visually sensitive scenery.
- Take advantage of views and view lines—sometimes make them places of ceremony.
- Manipulate the observer's vertical position in the landscape.

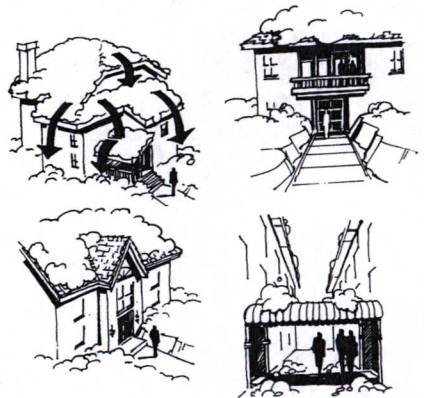
- Counteract mountains' intimidating scale by including sheltering, warm, intimate spaces for people.
- Attend to the foreground and protect the continuity of the ground plane.
- Understand the visual impacts of slope.
- In designing building form, take clues from the landforms.
- Remember the change in seasons.
- Take advance of the senses of hearing and touch as well as sight.

Dorward explains that her main aim is "to protect the natural community while animating the human community with its spirit" (vii), and her book does much to motivate and achieve this end. Phenomenologically, her work is important because it seeks harmonious design and place through the reconciliation of ecological and existential needs. In addition, Dorward's clear writing style is accessible to beginning design students and the lay public, and she provides useful case studies throughout.

D. Seamon

NOTE

¹Sherry Dorward, 1990. *Design for Mountain Communities: A Landscape and Architectural Guide*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold. 399 pp. \$44.95, hardcover. ISBN 0-442-22095-2.



Anticipating snow fall from roofs (Dorward, p. 81).

NOTES ON BACHELARD'S INHABITED GEOMETRY

David E. Denton

When Gaston Bachelard's *Psychoanalysis of Fire* was published in 1938, philosophers of science were shocked (Bachelard, 1968). Why would France's foremost historian and philosopher of science give his signature to that sort of exotic title? Actually, his point was straight forward: modern science doesn't speak of the phenomena we live, fire being his example. With his *The Poetics of Space*, published in 1958, Bachelard was making the same point regarding modern architecture's organization of space on the basis of abstract Cartesian coordinates, an organization which leads to the loss of the "tonalization of being" (Bachelard, 1969, p. 231), yielding much of our contemporary art and architecture with its large-scale coldness, while meeting all the criteria of function, utility and efficiency. Bachelardian architects, working from the images of their souls, would create only those spaces that invite caresses. A non-Cartesian architecture would lead to "inhabited geometry" (ibid., p. 146). Can Bachelard's dense prose be clarified in a series of notes? After twenty years of working with Bachelard's writings, along side of students here at the University of Kentucky, I think so. These notes are not exhaustive but serve to clarify his notion of inhabited geometry.

I. Bachelard's critique of Cartesianism and the subjectivity/objectivity dichotomy.

More technically, this dichotomy involves the distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Quite simply, our experience of space does not consist of a subjective response to some objective set of coordinates; rather, that experience is prior to such analytic categories. Such categories are products of mind rather than images emerging from soul. In my view, Bachelard's use of the word "mind" is almost identical with Freud's secondary process (Denton, 1986), though I doubt that Bachelard would approve. *Res extensa*, in the form of the measurable structures of our lived-spaces, are necessary but are never sufficient for the interpretations of the spaces we live. Rotation of

these spaces, including our lived-bodies, in imaginative space provides the flesh, the sufficiency of our understanding. "Multiplying its variations" (Bachelard, 1958, p. 234) is his cryptic way of putting it.

II. Bachelard's notion of the "image."

The "image" dominated Bachelard's attention in his later works, yet it is not an easy notion to grasp. We can refer to the image as his language of space (Denton, 1974), and we can note that he gave the image priority over the Kantian categories of space and time, but he consistently refused to freeze the term conceptually. (Perhaps it should be noted that his image is not that mental-fluff that is the stuff of much advertising, weight-loss therapy, self-esteem workshops, and the like. The materiality of his image counters such reduction.) Although he refuses definition, certain characteristics, necessary for an inhabited geometry, can be identified. These are *materiality*, *valorization*, and, what I call *playfulness*.

a. *Materiality*. Among Bachelard's favorite images are houses, cellars, huts, drawers, nests, corners, and human bodies. Why? Being non-Cartesian, he wished to avoid any mechanistic understanding, on one hand, and any resort to the priority of consciousness, on the other. Although identified as a phenomenologist, he rejected, for this reason, much of Husserl, the early Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre. Merleau-Ponty's later work, however, is another matter, for Bachelard's materiality is very close to Merleau-Ponty's corporeality or "the carnal." Bachelard's emphasis on the material image is fully realized in *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960), which, to make the point, is written in the feminine gender. With that, his non-modernity is made obvious.

David Seamon's essay on Thiiis-Evensen's *Archetypes in Architecture* (Seamon, 1990) suggests to me that Thiiis-Evensen's three existential expressions of architecture--motion, weight, and substance--is another way of describing what

Bachelard calls materiality. These expressions of architecture, as explicated by Thiis-Evensen, cannot be reduced to their subjective aspects in opposition to certain assumed objective components. Those walls that seem to cave in on us do have mass, and it is their weight that presses against us. And we know this fact at a pre-reflective level, for our "carnal awareness" (McCleary, 1986) is integral to the phenomenon of the caving-walls.

b. *Valorization*. A second characteristic of Bachelard's image is that of tonalization or valorization--terms that Bachelard uses interchangeably throughout his work and, again, without definition. But Bachelard's purpose is clear. The image always breathes the vibrations, the rhythms of intimacy, warmth, and attractiveness, and always functions on the "human plane," never at the level of theoretical abstraction (Bachelard, 1958, p. 48):

The grace of a curve is an invitation to remain. We cannot break away from it without hoping to return. For the beloved curve has nest-like powers; it incites us to possession, it is a curved corner, inhabited geometry (ibid., p. 146).

c. *Playfulness*. This term describes a third characteristic of Bachelard's images. I do not choose this term capriciously, for with his rejection of Cartesianism, with his insistence on the feminine, and with his elevation of the role of imagination, Bachelard takes his stand with that ancient tradition in which play is a sacred activity.

More technically put, the image is playful because no casual explanation is appropriate. First, since the image is immediately given and complete in itself at the moment of origin, it is not a probabilistic event; therefore, psychological explanations do not apply (ibid., p. xxv). Second, since the image has no history, there are no antecedents for those explanatory schemata which require such (ibid., p. xxv).

Third, since explanation, on the order of modern science, intellectualizes--that is, brackets the phenomenon with mind--it destroys the image, by subsumption and reduction, in the attempt (ibid., p. xx). Last, since the image is to be grasped in its first-time appearance, it is not amenable to the methods of observation and systematization that require "several-times" events (ibid., p. 156). If

one has difficulty in connecting these points with my earlier comment on playfulness, then simply recall a moment from your own experience, say, of a sandlot baseball game or of a day at the dance studio when an episode of improvisation disrupted the plan. Not all images are mental pictures, but, in the face of Cartesian science, they are all playful.

III. *Bachelard's geometry of the future.*

When in Bachelard's space, I can imagine a community of architects and other designers who have put aside "the prudent attitude" (ibid., p. xiv), for whom "the image animates the nerves of the future" (ibid., p. 160), and for whom lived-space is the originating site of their dreams and plans for the future. No longer "lost in the cosmos," to use Walker Percy's description of Cartesian thinkers, we would think imagistically, creating spaces appropriate to those given us by nature. Bachelard's material images of the spaces we are and the spaces we live lead us in what he calls ontological ways (ibid., p. 239) to a fresh understanding of, our worlds and our bodies. The bird in its nest, the snail in its shell, the fox with its den--these, too, are encompassed in Bachelard's images of valorized space. With these, he anchors the image in our psychic, sensory, and genetic depths. And, with these, he reminds us of the dimensions of inhabited geometry.

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ROCKING

Louise Million

My 21-year-old daughter sits in my kitchen, her left foot tucked up under her right leg. "I had a good first day," she informs me. "I think Richard will be a good boss."

I notice her long fingers moving in a gentle arc. (I smile to myself: She has inherited the habit of talking with her hands.) The room is silent, except for the squeaking of wooden rockers on the tile floor. I finish washing the dishes. I glance over. She leans her head into the high back of the chair, closes her eyes, and softly rocks to and fro. She opens her eyes and grins.

"I'm in your chair again." I see her eyes twinkling and teasing.

"Yes, and you know it, you scamp."

"But Mom, this is such a nice place... Right in front of the patio doors... And such a nice chair. It's not fair you get it all the time..."

I smile at her. (The exchange hasn't changed over the years. We both know our lines.)

"You're absolutely right: It's not fair. Nothing's fair. Now, out of my chair!"

She closes her eyes, rocking back and forth several more times. She giggles and lightly lifts herself from the chair.

"You need a bigger kitchen, then you'd have room for two rocking chairs."

I am alone with my rocking chair. A bright sun streams through the glass doors. I feel the floor, solid under my feet. I listen to the squeaking song of the rocker punctuate the silence at regular intervals. I lean my head against the chair and feel its seat and back, simultaneously firm and soft. My body rolls back and forth, relaxed and comforted. I close my eyes and a much younger image of my daughter's face emerges.

She is tiny as babies go, barely six pounds. And each time she wakes, I gather her in my arms. Her diaper always needs changing. I wrap her snugly in a blue blanket and carry her in the crook of my left arm, a warm bottle of milk in my right hand. We settle into the rocking chair and her sucking blends with the squeaking rockers. She closes her eyes, one hand grasping her ear and the other on the bottle. She sucks for a few minutes, pauses, sighs--then sucks again.

I hold her against my left shoulder and gently rub her back with my right hand. She feels so tiny and fragile in my arms. I hear my heart's beating against her perfect little body, all in perfect rhythm with the rocking. And I hum along. I have no recollection of any words. Perhaps there were some once. And where did the melody come from? My mother? My grandmother? Or does it belong to the rocking?

I see her through the kitchen window. She's in her fourth year, sitting on the grass with a kitten in her arms. Her head is bent forward, and she rubs her face against the soft fur, rocking the small kitten back and forth in her arms. I open the window and call out to her.

"What are you doing?"

"It's time for Minu to have her nap."

"That's a good idea" I nod, coming down the back steps with a blanket in my arms. "Here. Now you can cover her up."

"Mommy, Mommy. Minu's gone."

Hand in hand, we search the yard without success. We open the gate and enter the back alley.

In the distance, I notice a small grey furry body stretched out on the asphalt. Before I can stop the child, she runs towards the kitten.

She squats down and gathers the body in her arms. "Mommy, she's not moving. She's not breathing. What's wrong?"

"She's dead, my girl. A car ran over her."

The child's eyes look into mine, disbelieving. She is silent and still, looking at the limp body in her arms. She begins to sob and rock, back and forth, the kitten clutched close to her chest.

I collect them both in my arms. Without thinking I also begin to rock. Imagine: A mother squatting in a back alley rocking her child and humming, simultaneously holding and moving her tearful child.

Rock is commonly understood as a "mass of stony material" (Morehead & Morehead, 1981, p. 458). We think of rock as "a foundation; strength" (ibid.). Rock is something we can count on. "He's solid as a rock," we say. Or, "he's like the Rock of Gibraltar." If we are embedded in the Christian tradition, we remember Christ saying of Peter: "On this rock I will build my Church."

We also understand rock as "a backward and forward movement" (ibid.). The mother rocks the child, we say. In this instance "rock" is understood as a reassuring, comforting movement. But we can also imagine the child's being rocked in a threatening way—for example, if she were in an open boat on rough seas. "Rock," in short, is a movement with many possibilities.

Is it possible that "rock" understood as a noun and speaking to something solid, immovable, and foundational is also understood as a verb speaking to a fluid and equally foundational movement?

"It's time for bed. Go get your doll."

The child runs to her room and returns with Raggedy Anne, dangling upside down. The child climbs on my knees and I feel her little body

wriggling into my lap, searching for the right place.

"Okay?" I say, looking down into her wet curls and tucking the blanket around her shoulders. She snuggles against my check and is quiet. I listen to her breathing as the chair rocks gently forward and back. And I wonder what she is thinking. I am tempted to ask but decide not to. Minutes pass. I can feel her body and her breathing soften. And just when I think she is falling asleep, she lifts her head and looks me in the eye.

"Mommy, where's Minu gone?"

As I stumble around in my mind looking for an answer to her question, I am grateful for the feel of solid ground under my feet and the steady rocking to and fro.

"Mommy?"

I lean back farther into the rocking chair. "Well, we buried her this afternoon. She's in the ground, honey."

"I know that. She'd dead. But, where's Minu gone?"

"I don't know where her spirit has gone. Maybe she's gone to a place where kitties go—where we all go when we die."

"Mommy, are you going to die?"

"Yes. But not for a long, long time. You don't have to worry about that."

I squeeze her little body and gently tuck the blanket around her shoulders. She leans against me and we rock. I listen to the sound of my humming, the steady squeaking of the rocker, and the occasional car passing on the street. Again, I feel her body relax and watch Raggedy Anne slowly slide down the front of my lap to the floor.

A rocking chair is a relatively simple piece of equipment made with two convex undersurfaces fixed to the legs of a chair which enable it to rock. In his history of the chair, John Cloag (1964) explains that cradles with rockers had been known since the Middle Ages, probably much earlier, but the idea of fitting bends or rockers to the feet of chairs did not occur until the second half of the eighteenth century (p. 158).

Cloag also says that the invention of the rocking chair is attributed to Benjamin Franklin, "sometime between 1760 and 1770" (*ibid*). Cloag speculates that "the first rocking chair may conceivably have been a labor-saving device for mothers, to allow them to rock their babies while resting comfortably themselves" (*ibid*).

It is easy to see how a rocking chair is comfortable for a woman who rocks a child. In our imagination, however, we would like to think that perhaps Franklin was concerned with more than "labor-saving." Perhaps he observed the way women and their children moved with each other. Perhaps he responded to the essential intimacy of a child's rocking in its mother's arms. And perhaps it was this glimpse of something important and meaningful that he wished to bring to the forefront by way of the rocking chair.

I suggested earlier that the spoken understanding of "rock" implies both a movement and a mass or foundational strength. But how is such a reconciliation possible? Rocking in a chair involves a forward and backward movement of the torso. The feet, though stationary, set the body in motion. Is it possible that this combination of movements embodies, in effect, the spoken understanding of rock as both "solid" and "movement"? In this sense, rocking engages the person in two ways: as stillness and as movement. One might say that rocking is an essential, embodied understanding of the person's being a solid mass and a fluid process at the same time. Rocking, understood in this way, becomes a movement of great intimacy and meaning.

I settle in my chair and grin mischievously at my daughter. "You really think I should get another rocking chair?"

"Well, maybe not. It wouldn't be the same."

I'm not entirely surprised by her answer. I've always sensed that part of her attraction to the chair is the fact that it belongs to me. But I'm curious.

"It wouldn't be the same? What do you mean?"

"It wouldn't be your chair. And I wouldn't feel

as good in it."

"Bingo!" I think to myself. I sip my coffee and reflect that rocking is a movement of great significance. It is associated with comforting, with learning—with silently being together in the most intimate way. One might say that the rocking chair, a most ordinary "piece of equipment," holds fundamental and unspoken understandings of what constitutes love between a mother and her child.

"Someday, I'll give you my chair," I gently say.

"I doubt it!" she says in what strikes me as a haughty, threatening tone. And then, more softly, "Well, at least not for a long time yet."

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HOME, HOST, AND GUEST

David Appelbaum

The word *host* is deeply ambiguous. We are equally host to the gods and to the microbes. Our death can come from both higher and lower places. An entity comes into my home—what really do I know beforehand of it, him, or her? He could be Elijah or my worst enemy done up as Elijah.

Perfect humility cuts like a sword through disguise. Consider Baucis and Philemon, the humble couple that Ovid speaks of in *Metamorphoses*. At their front door one stormy night, appeared two ruffians. The hut was crude, the cupboard poor, and only a single bowl of tallow guttered in the wind. But the spirit of the host was strong upon Baucis and Philemon. They felt no shame for their table, belongings, or condition, which was a plentitude, but only need to obey the impulse to host. The dirt floor was hard but clean. By the hearth, was a simple shrine of granite.

The questionable guests sat at the rough table, giving no sign. Philemon, the good woman, began to pour goats' milk, for they had no other libation to offer. Imagine her astonishment when the cups she poured filled with wine and when the table became heavy with meats "and other dainties." Her guests were not men but gods. Zeus and Hermes were abroad, testing the law of hospitality as Joseph and Mary would in another age. Understanding their need to admit the stranger as oneself, Baucis and his wife reaped a rich reward.

Another ambiguity of *host* involves the joining of giver and recipient as twin snakes coiled around a common rod. Hermes' caduceus gives the image of unity in opposition. In reality, the separateness of guest and host is not what it seems to be. What binds the two together? The home encloses the opposing forces, places them in balance, and allows them to serve each other—and perhaps a higher purpose. The guest's sharp eye disentangles accidental clutter from essential things.

The house is a receptacle, a storeroom, a depository for castoffs, things out-of-season, articles of sentimental value, mementos, baubles—anything

that takes up space. These things are attracted to the house by a law of conservation. They occupy attics, basements, and spare rooms, sometimes like a conquering army. In the house, we live atop a vast archeological dig, if we would ever burrow down. Here, the guest comes in. We know the experience of living in his discerning eye as he takes in our favorite cranny, of seeing things shorn of private associations, without special history, seen as what they are. To the true guest, most is discardable. Only the honest heart is needed.

The guest moves us closer to the ground. He breaks our preoccupation with self, suffering us our riches or poverty, and entrances us with news of the outside. He has travelled from afar. He has been along the way. He bears witness to what, being inside, we forget—the world. News from abroad breaks the daily round of chores and renews the spirit to repeat them tomorrow.

Such a world is always the New World. Not that we feel constrained to leave and trek across the sea. We discover, as hosts, that we are *keepers* of the home. Without the rod of the caduceus, the world axis and the twin halves of creation—outside and inside—would fly apart. The home is meant for the interchange of host and guest, over a good meal, a glass of wine, while the storm wind whips up the trees. Without this salutatory conversation, the land remains mute. Between nomad and hermit, very little passes. In Aristotle's sense, the home is a true universal—a cauldron in which particular things inhere, are melted down, and become alloyed to forge new things.

"Come in. Do let me take your coat." This expression is part of any ritual greeting of the guest. The words initiate the role of host. They welcome but also serve another purpose. The host takes the guest's wraps and makes him at home. That is, the host undresses the guest, takes the disguise with the help of which the guest appears in public, and returns the guest to this natural state. There is the relief, nervousness ("Will I be accepted

thus?"), and sudden intimacy of the guest.

If the host participates in the process, he strangely find himself also being undressed. To stand fully clothed before another who is unveiled is an act of domination, not hospitality. The act of entry has a counterpart in the sexual act. The lover undresses his beloved and admires her naked form. For himself not to undress is to leave the act without the possibility of consummation. Sexual union, moreover, depends on dissolving the difference of outside and inside. Initially, the lover comes from the outside into his beloved. Thereafter, they dwell together without boundaries in the moment.

Perhaps the mutual meeting is the center of hospitality, for time present exists by the hearth of eternity. In common parlance, this moment is when guest and host get down to business. They have exchanged niceties and formulas of passage. They have broken bread together and sipped wine after toasting the gods of the table and bedside. Now they sit by the fire, earnestly attending each other.

The host is strangely silent. What needs to be said? The host listens, waiting. He has not yet heard what would complete the exchange, what would allow him and guest to exchange places. He, like Atlas, has borne his duty without complaint, even with joy. He feels the time to move on, to be relieved of the burden. In the den, every sound is muted. Still, the host waits, his hope fading.

What needs to be expressed between guest and host? One is reminded of the Grail legend and the first encounter between Parsifal and the Maimed King. The kingly host suffers his wound in despair while famine and pestilence overtake his kingdom. He knows that his cure will come through an unexpected guest, but his marvelous castle is not easily found. When Parsifal does ride up, a red knight on a white horse, the king puts on his best display of hospitality. No riches are spared. At the sumptuous banquet, the entertainment suddenly falls mute. Expectant eyes turn toward Parsifal, but no word arises. He is cut off from his heart. The king suffers silently. His kingdom remains the waste land, all for want of a word.

What is missing in the encounter? The story

tells us: three little words, "What ails thee?" Or, as we would say today, "How are you?" The kingly silence awaits the question of questions, the question of how one suffers one's existence. What are your wounds? How did you come by them? In what way are you looking for a cure? What, if anything, would help? The question is so very personal. It is the only real question.

"How are you?" The king's specific answer--"Fine," "All right," "Not so well"--is immaterial. To be a guest is to distinguish the essential from the accidental, the wheat from the chaff. What state the host suffers or enjoys falls on the side of accident. The essential matter is that one is reminded of the self whose state it is, of the forgotten stranger. The king and all of his subjects languish until the reminder is delivered. The host is not himself until the guest arrives on his quest. Nor are we ourselves.

Hospitality is the confrontation of the two that are one. Which leaves us with the matter of the philosopher. We know that Socrates led a public existence. He never took in guests, never engaged in philosophy at home but in the agora, the marketplace, or the gymnasium. He was never host. Yet he was hosted, often and by many in prominence, but only once was his deficiency called on him. It was Diotima who told him, "I don't know how you can hope to master the philosophy of Love, if *that's* too much for you to understand".

This gadfly of souls, this corruptor of youth, was a fitting martyr for philosophy. By abjuring the human role as host, his search could have no end. One question followed another, with no relief for the wound. "They consume me," he once declared, "but I cannot stop myself."

What Socrates says is true. No one is in a position to help himself. This is the condition of the Maimed King awaiting the royal guest. But no one ever entered Socrates' dwelling place to ask, "What ails thee?" Consequently, his relentless figure lives, moving from the steps of the court to the public forum even to the city walls, never stopping, always asking, never waiting to be asked.

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